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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

INFORMATION REPORT

COUNTRY Hungary

SUBJECT Public Health

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DATE OF I

SUPPLEMENT TO
REPORT NO.

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1. One of the good points of the Communist regime in Hungary was its public health program which provided free medical examinations, hospitalization, medicines, glasses, X-rays, mother and child care. Although medical care was available to more people than before, there were a number of drawbacks to the program. There was a shortage of physicians, so that medical examinations were superficial. There were not enough beds in the hospitals of Budapest to accommodate all those who were sick, and I'm sure conditions were no better elsewhere. With the exception of aspirin, medicines could be obtained only with a doctor's prescription, and aspirin could only be bought one or two tablets at a time.
2. Health insurance was compulsory for all employed persons in Hungary. The employer, whether the State or private enterprise, paid the premium for the insurance. Self-employed persons might take out their own insurance. Every worker was entitled to free medical care, medicines, X-rays, eye examinations, glasses, dental work, and false teeth. Every factory which employed at least 500 workers had a factory physician. For dental work, eye examination, and X-ray treatment, the worker was examined at the State Social Insurance Institute (Orszagos Tarasadalom Biztosito Intezet - OTI). If he needed glasses, he was sent to the Optical and Colored Print Shops (Optikai es Fotoszak Uezletek - OFOTERT) where the lenses were ground. Neither the frames nor the lenses were of good quality; the lenses were not of Zeiss manufacture. According to rumor, the trouble with the dentists was that they wanted to extract teeth rather than save them. In case of sickness, the worker reported to the district physician (koerzeti orvos) who could authorize sick leave up to three days for which the worker received full pay. Only a dispensary physician (rendellog orvos) was able to authorize a longer sick leave or hospitalization. A worker with tuberculosis, who was placed on the sick list by a physician had to go

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to a sanatorium. If a worker remained at home during his illness, he received 67 per cent of his pay; if he went to a hospital, he received 33 per cent of his pay. Many workers could not afford to maintain their families on only 33 per cent of their pay, and would beg the doctors to let them return to work. Hospitals were crowded and it was frequently necessary to wait several days or a week for admission.

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3. An expectant mother who was employed was entitled to a three months vacation, two weeks before the birth of the child and two and one-half months afterward. Mothers received free pre-natal, natal, and post-natal medical care. In the villages there were trained midwives who assisted at birth. In factories which employed more than 500 workers, there were nurseries for children from the age of six months to three years. For the first child the parents received 200-300 forints and a monthly allowance of 16 forints from the State. For two children the allowance was 32 forints per month; for ten children the allowance was one thousand forints per month. All women over 35 had to submit to an examination for cancer.
4. The hospitals, sanatoriums, and clinics, all of which were government controlled, were administered by the Ministry of Public Health. I know nothing about the construction of new buildings for civilian hospitals or clinics. There was a nationwide building program, however, to set up small health stations (ambulanz) of the dispensary type (smaller than out-patient clinics). This program was developed because of the need for medical aid stations in the rural areas. It was anticipated that these stations also would be used for treating venereal diseases. I believe that both the police and the army had built new hospitals. In Budapest, there were quite a few small private sanatoriums which were confiscated during the nationalization program, [REDACTED] the army was planning to take over the charity hospital (Szeretet Kórház) on America Street. I have only the following fragmentary information concerning other hospitals.
 - (a) There was a hospital for members of the armed forces and their dependents located on Szall ut 17 in Budapest. This hospital was damaged during the war, but it had been repaired.
 - (b) St Lazzlo, a hospital for epidemic diseases, was near Gyali ut and Koenyves Kalman Koerut, but I am not sure of the exact address.
 - (c) The Budakeszi Tuberculosis sanatorium had 200-600 beds; it was used by workers.
 - (d) Another tuberculosis sanatorium was located on Keks, the highest peak of the Matra mountains.
5. There was a decided shortage of doctors in Hungary; the proportion of sick persons to physicians was simply too high. The Boetvoes Lorand University planned to give special courses to individuals who would then be allowed to render limited medical services. There were still a few private doctors and dentists practicing in Hungary; they were all older and had a difficult time because although many would prefer to go to a private physician, they could not afford it. There was an ample supply of nurses.

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6. I know of no serious disease epidemics in Hungary. Vaccination and immunization were free of charge. All children had to be vaccinated against small pox when they were only a few months old, and again before they reached the age of 14. Children would not be admitted to the elementary school without vaccination certificate. Diphtheria vaccination at the age of six was also compulsory. Vaccination against tuberculosis, the BCG vaccination, although required, was not very popular because serum poisoning or death often resulted. The common belief was that this vaccine was still in the experimental stage and that the Russians insisted on its use because they wanted to obtain the serum. In 1945, typhus vaccination was made compulsory for all citizens but as of February 1952, it was obligatory only for personnel of the armed forces. All soldiers also received tetra vaccination.
7. Other factors affecting public health in Hungary are the following:
- (a) The water supply of Budapest came from the Danube; the water was purified at Bekasmegye near Budapest. No chlorine was used and the water was excellent.
 - (b) Burial expenses in Hungary were very high; the cheapest burial cost 1,500-2,000 forints. The trade union granted death benefits of 200-500 forints.
 - (c) Houses of prostitution were closed in 1950.
 - (d) Vaccination for dogs was obligatory. The dogs were vaccinated and registered in district offices; the cost was 10-20 forints. The same was generally true of cats. The tax for a purebred dog was 26 forints but it was 126 forints for a mongrel.

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